

MEAT GRADES

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# CONSUMERS' GUIDE

JUNE 1940



REFRIGERATORS



DOLLAR STRETCHERS



INVESTING IN SOIL



FOOD BILL

# CONSUMERS' GUIDE

JUNE 1940

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**WHAT THIS COUNTRY NEEDS**, an expansive Vice President once said, is a good 5-cent cigar.

Under different circumstances, the director of the public relief agency in New Orleans arose during a meeting in one of the ball-rooms of a downtown New Orleans hotel and said, substantially, what this city needs is a 5-cent quart of milk.

The relief director wasn't catchphrasing or wisecracking. "Most of the people on relief in New Orleans are there because of undernourishment. I would say that if we went back to the basic source to find out why we are carrying these people, 50 to 60 percent of the cases would be due to undernourishment.

"If we could give milk, we could materially lighten the relief load, not today, but perhaps 10 years from now. We are extremely worried about the children. . .

". . . red beans and rice and molasses and bread are the staples of diet, particularly in the families of laborers in underprivileged families and among Negroes. . .

"You can go out here and look at your diseases and malnutrition. . . on the street—rickets and things of that kind. . ."

The relief director was speaking at a hearing held by the United States Department of Agriculture for the purpose of getting evidence on how the Milk Marketing Agreement and Milk Order for New Orleans should be amended.

Federal milk marketing agreements and orders in general fix the prices which distributors pay dairy farmers for their milk. These agreements and orders may be issued by the Department of Agriculture in cities where a substantial part of the milk used moves across State lines. Many of these agreements and orders now provide a special price which dairy farmers receive for that milk which is sold to relief families under approved low-cost milk programs. Nickle-a-quart milk, under such a provision, has been on sale in Boston (see November 1,

1939, issue of *Consumers' Guide*) and in Chicago for some time.

When it was suggested that the New Orleans Milk Marketing Agreement and Milk Order be amended to permit the sale of milk at 5 cents a quart to families receiving public assistance in New Orleans, the relief director had his chance to speak up.

Getting 5-cent milk takes more than good intentions. It requires cooperation of different kinds from farmers, distributors, local relief agencies, and the Federal Government.

This is how it works, in the broad. Farmers get a price for relief milk which is lower than the usual price they get for milk sold for bottling, but higher than the price they get for milk used in making milk products.

Distributors agree to take over the job of pasteurizing and delivering the milk to the homes or depots where certified relief families get it. For the plan to succeed, they must offer to do this job at a minimum charge. Average net charges of distributors before July 1, were running in Boston at 1.3 cents per quart; in Chicago at 1.4 cents for milk delivered to stations, and 3.7 cents for a quart of milk delivered to a relief home.

City governments have a job to do, too. Their relief agencies agree to certify the families who are eligible to buy nickel milk and the amount they may purchase. In Chicago, the city pays the 5 cents, the price of milk delivered to homes, and 4 cents for a quart bought at a milk station. In Boston, relief families pay 5 cents out of the cash relief funds paid them by the city (WPA workers buy milk for 7 cents). City relief agencies set up and manage the depots, with WPA help, where Chicago and Boston relief families can get their milk.

By the time 5-cent milk is pushed over the counter or delivered, it has cost more than 5 cents. This is where the Federal Government, through the Surplus Marketing Administration, comes in. With money authorized by Congress, the Government agrees to pay the difference between the actual cost of the delivered milk and the direct or indirect contributions made by the city. In Boston, the subsidy amounts to about 0.72 cent a quart; in Chicago, it is 0.98 cent for station-delivered milk, 2.3 cents for home-delivered milk.

On May 15, all the machinery for supplying needy families in New Orleans was in mesh and ready to start. Farmers had agreed to accept 4.3 cents a quart for relief milk. Ordinarily, they get about 5 cents for the same milk sold in bottles to other consumers, and about 4 cents a quart for milk sold to make butter, or cheese, or ice cream. Milk distributors agreed to handle milk for relief families at an average cost of 2.68 cents

a quart, which includes the cost of selling the milk at depots, because WPA labor cannot be used for this service in New Orleans as it is in Boston and Chicago. (Beginning July 1, this cost will be cut to 2.53 cents per quart.) The city relief administration has arranged for depots, is certifying eligible families; those on relief pay for the milk out of their cash relief payments, those on WPA pay for it out of their wages. The Federal Government is helping by chipping in an average of 2.68 cents a quart. On July 1, this will drop to 2.53 cents.

How much milk actually flows into the homes of needy families along this nickel route depends on how much these families take advantage of it. So far as they are concerned, they are free to pass it by if they wish. But Boston and Chicago families have been quick to line up. From early August last year to the first of March this year, something like 62,000 quarts of relief milk have been purchased by Boston families every day. In Chicago, some 92,000 quarts a day are moving into needy homes. Still another plan for penny-a-glass milk for Chicago's school children, operating similarly with farmer-distributor-city-U. S. Government collaboration, is being worked out to put this health-giving food within reach of people who otherwise would not get it. In New Orleans, whose milk plan is still young, about 9,000 quarts a day are being purchased.

Consumers in other cities probably wonder why Boston, Chicago, and New Orleans have led in this campaign to apply the milk cure to their health and diet problems. The plan can be put into effect in any city where a Federal Milk Marketing Agreement or Order is in effect and where the order or agreement provides for low-cost milk. Cities that qualify for 5-cent milk right now, but which don't have it are:

Cincinnati, Ohio; Fall River, Mass.; Kansas City, Mo.; La Porte, Ind.; Louisville, Ky.; Lowell-Lawrence, Mass.; the Quad Cities—Bettendorf and Davenport, Iowa; Rock Island, Moline, East Moline, and Silvis, Ill.; New York, N. Y.; St. Louis, Mo., and Washington, D. C.

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## Buying Meat by Grade

*New rules for Government grade labeling of meats make this guide to values more useful for consumers*

**SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO** a finicky *maitre d'hôtel* of a large American steamship line decided he ought to do something about the meat he was getting.

As the matter stood, it was too much of a hit-or-miss proposition. One day he would call up a dealer, put in his order for a couple hundred pounds of beef, and on delivery find that his purchase met his quality standards. A few days later, he would call up that same dealer, make a similar order, and discover that the quality of the meat was below the standard wanted.

Here was a buyer who bought carcasses, not cuts. But he found himself pretty much in the same boat as Mrs. Average Consumer at the meat counter. He wanted to be sure of the quality he got for his dollar every time he bought. For him, a daily tour of packers' coolers was out of the question. To depend on trial and error was expensive and sometimes ruinous to his reputation and service.

What was needed was some assurance of meat quality at the time he bought. He wanted to be able to buy grades of beef just as his company specified certain grades of steel when it laid down hulls for its ships. But grades for meat—to be of any use—had

to be standardized, not haphazard designations on which no 2 packers agreed. For this standardization he turned to the U. S. Department of Agriculture which for a few years had been using tentative standards on classes and grades of beef as well as other types of meat in its work as a reporter of market news.

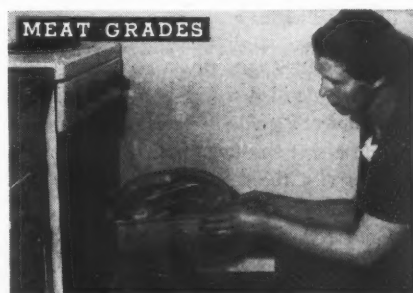
In a few weeks the buying agent was still buying beef over the telephone or by written orders. But now it was not "a hundred pounds of beef—and make it good!" Instead he could ask his local supply house for "a hundred pounds of Government-graded Choice Steer" and be reasonably sure of getting the quality he wanted.

TODAY'S HOUSEWIFE CAN LOOK TO THIS buying agent as the pioneer consumer to get Government-graded meat. It wasn't long before fellow members of the beef-buying profession—buyers for hotels, clubs, restaurants—took to the idea and began to specify "Government-graded meat" when they bought.

There was a day when housewives knew the quality of their meat because it came from animals raised and slaughtered at home or in

the neighborhood. As cities grew, meat animal raising became a highly specialized business. Great plains were opened up. Vast herds of cattle roamed the thousands of acres. In the cities, slaughter houses and packing plants were built and people in Eastern cities along the sea coast began buying beef that came from half way across a continent and from even farther.

In the early days of trading in meats, big buyers bargaining in the market began to designate the type of meat they wanted according to the region where the animal was raised. "Native" beef, for example, was beef from the Corn Belt. From the Range States came "Western" beef. Gradually there grew up variations in these des-





4 ignations, such as "Choice," "Good," "Medium," and "Common Westerns."

Designations such as these, it turned out, were about as scientific as looking at the moon through a pair of opera glasses. But this was nothing compared with what happened when cattle originating in the Range States were shipped off to the Corn Belt for feeding. Meat designations, as used by the trade, became confused to the point of complete uselessness. Furthermore, they lacked even common acceptance. Meat called "Good Native" by one packer was "Choice Western" for another. There was nothing systematic or scientific in the way beef was described between traders or between regions. And what was true of beef was true also of other kinds of meat.

Ranchers and packers began to grumble and complain. "There ought to be a law," they argued. Researchers at the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Illinois, heeding the grumbling, tried to straighten out the chaos. In 1902, they listed all existing meat designations, defined and interpreted them. The results of the study got tucked away in a bulletin.

Flip the pages of the calendar 14 years—to 1916—and you reach another significant moment in the history of meat grades. That year, the U. S. Department of Agriculture pulled the Illinois study out of the files and used it as a starter in setting up its first tentative standards for classes and designations of beef. These designations were not intended to be quality guides to consumers, but were planned merely to simplify the Government's job of market news reporting. Establishment of these trail-blazing beef designations was followed in short order by tentative designations for lamb, veal, mutton, and pork.

Here were standard descriptions that had many more elements of importance than had the old trade designations for meat. They took account of such things as conformation and fat distribution, the appearance of the meat itself, as well as the section of the country where the animal was brought up. But they were never stamped on meat carcasses. They were used only in reporting market supplies and prices.

In 1923, when the buyer for the Steamship firm decided to order his meat by the Government's grade designations and so became the first consumer to use this Government service, the need for re-examination of grade designations became more acute.

Grades were not actually examined into, however, until 3 years later—in 1926. As a result of hearings, revisions in the grades

were made. These were subsequently issued as official United States standards for grading beef, lamb, veal, mutton, and pork. Despite the fact that grades were now available to consumers if they asked for quality labeled meat, it was producers, not consumers, who got behind grading and pushed it along.

RED-LETTER DAY IN THE HISTORY OF MEAT grading is May 2, 1927. Early that morning officials of the Department of Agriculture, grade stamps in hand, walked into packing plants in 7 of the Nation's large cities, and quality grading of meat as we know it today was underway.

At first, grading was restricted to "Choice" and "Prime" grades of steer and heifer beef. By January 1928, the experiment had become successful enough to include the "Good" grade. A little later the service took in all grades of beef, lamb, veal, and mutton of all classes.

But it was over a year before experimental grading and stamping became a regular service of the Department of Agriculture, put on a fee basis to cover its cost.

Here the story for beef grades sidetracks into its own separate chapter. From their earliest beginnings, grades for beef had always been based on a triple set of standards, one for each class—or type—of beef, such as steer, heifer, and cow. That meant there was a "choice" grade for steer, for

WHOLESOME meat bears a round purple stamp; quality graded meat bears the long ribbon stamps. Don't confuse the two. All meat sold from one State to another must be inspected and passed by the U. S. Government; the round purple stamp means that the meat is wholesome. Quality grading is not compulsory; you can get graded meat, however, if you insist your butcher obtain it for you.



heifer, and for cow, a "good" grade for each class of beef, and so on down the line. Those class differentiations were carryovers from the days when retailers bought beef in terms of live cattle. A bulletin of the Department of Agriculture explains this situation this way: "Except in the case of the very young of all species, sex condition affects the character of the carcass, and this in turn influences the prices which a given class will bring, as compared with the price received for another class. For instance, a steer beef carcass is more desirable than a cow beef carcass of the same grade; hence, steer beef sells at a relatively higher price than does cow beef of a comparable grade."

More simply this means that a consumer buying Government-graded beef was expected to know that the same grade in the 3 classes of beef did not always mean the same quality. Having a triple standard was useful to traders—the wholesalers and big buyers—because the amount of meat obtainable from a carcass varies with the sex and age of the animal. But for the ordinary household consumer, it muddled the whole picture. It meant the equivalent of carrying along a dictionary of meat grades every time she bought, if she was to know accurately what she was getting.

The danger was always present, too, that unscrupulous dealers would palm off a "Choice" cut of heifer beef, when the consumer asking for the "Choice" grade meant the best grade available, or "choice steer."

To guard against such consumer confusion, last year the Department of Agriculture made a new proposal to producers, consumers, and meat packers. Why not do away with class designations altogether, so far as the domestic consumer is concerned but show them on grading certificates, the Department asked. That would give dealers the information they need, but eliminate a designation consumers don't need. Quality marks would then boil down to 5 simple grade names: Prime, Choice, Good, Commercial, and Utility. That—and no more—would be all the consumer would have to remember when she asked for Government-graded beef.

Packers, dealers, consumers took to the idea at conferences called by the Department of Agriculture for discussion of the plan. The simple fact that what consumers wanted was a grade designation on a cut of beef was the keystone of the plan. Such a grade stamp would improve their chances of getting the quality they pay for.

And there you have chapter 3 in this thumb-nail history which brings the story down to the present.



TODAY YOU CAN BUY GOVERNMENT-GRADED beef that is graded according to this "single standard." All you have to remember are these grade names and their place in the quality scale of beef from top to bottom: Prime, Choice, Good, Commercial, and Utility.

Beef is graded on the basis of quality, finish, and conformation.

"Quality" is defined as color, texture, grain, and degree of marbling of the beef.

Finish is judged on the quantity of fat, its color, character, and the way it is distributed in a cut of beef.

Conformation is the general "build" and appearance of the beef. For consumers, its importance lies in the fact that a cut rating high in conformation has a large proportion of edible meat to bone.

HERE IS WHAT THE BEEF GRADES AS NOW used mean:

**Prime:** The highest grade of beef, but available in very limited quantities, usually in late fall and winter. Domestic consumers rarely see it. Used almost exclusively by hotels, restaurants, clubs. Produced only from specially fed steers and heifers which represent the highest degree of perfection in breeding.

**Choice:** Highest grade of beef commonly available to consumers. Marketed year-round in the Middle West and the East, and available in limited quantities in the West. Usually cuts are relatively fat and require considerable trimming. Produced from steers and heifers specially nourished on concentrated feed.

**Good:** This grade meets the needs of consumers who have small food budgets and want the best quality they can get for moderate prices. Sold in all sections of the country throughout the year. Carries enough fat for average needs, but not enough to require heavy trimming before serving. Produced largely from steers and heifers fed intensively on concentrated feed for varying lengths of time. From this grade down the manner of cooking requires attention. Tougher meats can become more tender with proper cooking.

**Commercial:** For consumers with tight food budgets able to buy beef only if prices are below average. Has very little excess fat. Produced from steers and heifers and relatively young cows fed largely on grass or roughage, and fed concentrated feed for only a short time.

**Utility:** Lowest Government-graded meat usually available to consumers. This grade obviously includes meats which are not tender but can be made palatable by careful and



**GUESSING** what quality you get each time you buy meat can be a costly business. You can tell what an official grader thinks of the meat if you ask to see the quality mark. Quality graded meat carries the mark all the way down the length of the carcass. Beef grades, from top to bottom, are: Prime, Choice, Good, Commercial, Utility.

imaginative cooking. It should be sold at the lowest price. Produced from steers and heifers fed largely or entirely on grass or roughage and from cows producing beef deemed suitable for sale in the retail market.

**CHEAP CUTS REQUIRE LONG AND CAREFUL** cooking. The Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., will tell you how to cook these cuts for best results. And remember that lean meat—no matter what kind, cut, or grade it is—has practically the same food value.

Grades for other kinds of meat remain unchanged. For veal, lamb, mutton, they are: U. S. Prime, U. S. Choice, U. S. Good, U. S. Medium, and U. S. Plain. Medium and Plain for these meats correspond to Commercial and Utility Grades for beef.

Neither Government nor producers claim that meat grades as they exist today have reached final perfection. Experience has shown, however, that present grades are a fairly dependable guide to quality for consumers and are a great advance over grades that vary with the house that sells the meat. Putting the grades through the mill of re-examination and revision has happened before; it is likely to happen again.

Up to now grades have grown out of producer practices and needs. Maybe laboratory scientists will discover that there are even more accurate factors than those now

used for determining variations in quality from the consumer viewpoint. Perhaps the perfect system of grading will take account of how the meat is to be used in cooking.

**MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED ON MANY** fronts. Should grades take into account the length of time meat has been aged? Do grain-fed animals always yield the best quality meat? Such questions as these can be answered only after the laboratory workers do more analysis and testing.

Meantime, here for consumers are guides to quality which, while not infallible, provide a greater safeguard against paying for quality you don't get than does the time-dishonored method of guessing.

The grading service today reaches into all important meat packing centers in the country. Beef sold to consumers bearing the Government grade mark represents about 10 percent of the total amount of meat Federally inspected for wholesomeness; the percentage is slightly smaller for other kinds of meat.

Meat grading—as has always been the case—is voluntary. Any retailer can get Government-graded meat by ordering it from his wholesaler. That means it's up to the consumer to ask for cuts that are Government-graded if they are not available in his local markets.

Grading is done by trained experts who must have had at least 6 years of experience

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# So You're Buying a Refrigerator?

*Careful consumers count costs three ways before investing in this important piece of household equipment. Bureau of Home Economics experts tell you features to watch for*

**IN THE DAYS** before inventors figured out ways of plugging scores of household tools into electric outlets, the choice of a refrigerator was simple. There was nothing to do but buy an "ice box" or stick to more primitive cooling methods—hanging food in a spring house, or using a homemade variety of cooler box covered with a damp cloth. Though there are hundreds of thousands of families who have no refrigerator of any description, and thousands of others who still stick to these primitive methods, science has moved on. Today, ice refrigerators are streamlined, more efficient than ever, and refrigerators run by electricity, gas, and kerosene are on the market bidding for consumer favor.

How to choose between them is one of the knotty problems facing a careful consumer.

There are no standards of performance now available to household buyers to help take the guesswork out of choosing this important piece of kitchen equipment. But the buyer who gives heed to several rules in selecting stands a better chance of getting value for the money than one who buys the eeny-meeny-miny-mo way.

**YOUR CHOICE DEPENDS, FIRST, ON WHERE** you live, and what kind of power is available at the lowest cost. Farm families whose homes are unwired usually must choose between ice, bottled gas, or kerosene refrigerators. City dwellers can often take their pick of ice, gas, or electric refrigerators.

A simple guide for weighing pros and cons of ice versus mechanical refrigerators is the Bureau of Home Economics' list of advantages and disadvantages of ice-cooled refrigerators.

## *Advantages:*

In general, the ice-cooled refrigerator is less expensive to buy than mechanical types. It is easy to install, requiring only some provision for draining. There is little to get out of order and there is no noise. The food does not freeze, nor will it dry out as quickly if left uncovered as it will in mechanical refrigerators.

## *Disadvantages:*

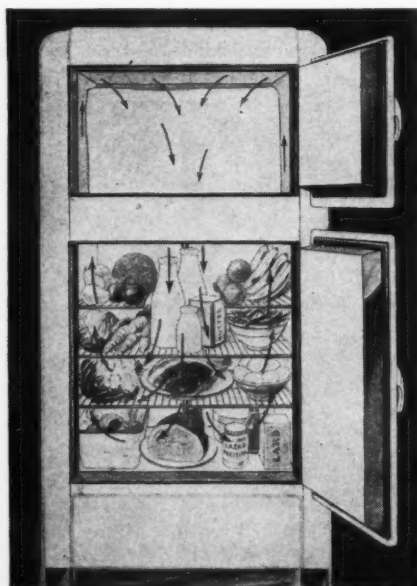
The temperature in ice-cooled boxes is not as a rule as low as in those mechanically cooled. A constant temperature is more difficult to maintain than in the mechanically-cooled refrigerator. It is not always convenient to be at home when the iceman comes. Unless the drain pipe is connected with the outside, drip pans must be remembered and emptied.

Suppose you are the lucky kind of consumer who can choose between all 4 types of boxes, how would you start?

**HERE ARE 5 THINGS YOU WANT TO KNOW** about any refrigerator: (1) its initial cost; (2) its operating cost; (3) the availability, reliability, and cost of repair service; (4) the cubic contents; (5) temperatures that can be maintained.

Initial costs are the easiest figures to get. They are usually on the label, and every

**MOST MODERN ICE BOXES** are built with the ice compartment at the top. The efficiency of any ice box is dependent on the insulation and on the arrangements made to allow cold air to leave the ice compartment and warm air from the food compartment to return to the ice section.



salesman knows them. But initial costs are a long distance from being accurate measures of the dent which a refrigerator will make in your family pocket book. One of the factors that would help you to budget initial costs would be assurance that the box will operate efficiently for this or that many years assuming reasonable care. Such information, like similar assurance regarding automobiles, is hard to get. Many boxes are sold with a guarantee for 5, or maybe more, years. This does not necessarily mean that the box will be uneconomical to run after the guarantee has expired. It may be doing valiant service for you 10 or 15 years hence. You can't be assured of that, however, and no independent tests have been made against which you can measure the life expectancy of any particular refrigerator.

After initial costs, there are operating expenses. Labels should give you this information, but few do. See if the salesman can supply the data, telling you (1) how much power or ice is required to operate, say a 6 cubic foot box for a month when empty, to maintain certain temperatures; (2) what is the cost of this much power or ice in your neighborhood.

**FAILING TO GET THE FACTS ABOUT THE** power or ice needed, you might fall back on some rough estimates which the Bureau of Home Economics has made after studying different types of boxes in operation and observing the experience of others. These figures are averages based on a study of 6 cubic foot empty refrigerators operating at a room temperature of 90 degrees and maintaining good refrigerating temperature.

Ice refrigerators of this size will require about 700 pounds of ice a month. Electric refrigerators will use approximately 30 kilowatt hours a month. Kerosene refrigerators will take 15 gallons a month to keep cool. A gas refrigerator will use about 1,800 cubic feet of manufactured gas, or 1,000 cubic feet of natural gas.

Bearing in mind that these are estimates and not invariable yardsticks, you can find out the comparative operating costs of ice, kerosene, gas, and electric refrigerators in

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**IF LABELS** are really informative, they will tell you how much power or ice, depending on the type of refrigerator, is needed to operate the box. Where labels fail to give this information, be sure to ask for it from the salesman, and check against the rough estimates given below.

your neighborhood without going farther than your telephone.

In Washington, D. C., where electricity is comparatively inexpensive, a 6 cubic foot electric refrigerator would cost around 90 cents a month. A refrigerator using manufactured gas would cost \$1.40 a month to operate. A kerosene refrigerator would use \$1 worth of fuel a month, and an ice box would melt \$4.20 worth of ice to keep your food cool for a month.

HAVING FIGURED THE COST OF THE BOX AND the cost of keeping it operating, next look into the matter of repair service. Since ice boxes have no motors to get out of kilter, you can expect low repair bills for them. Mechanical refrigerators present greater problems. Careful buyers will find out in advance of purchase how available, reliable, and expensive repair service will be. There will come a time when each of these conditions is vitally important in the efficient operation of the equipment. If service is provided free for a certain period, that should be stated in the sales contract. Sales contracts should be read carefully several times so that every detail in them is understood and agreed upon before signatures are put to them.

All costs vary, naturally, with the size of the box and the job you want it to do. Here again the label should tell you what is the cubic contents of each box. If it doesn't,

don't guess the figure yourself. Insist on accurate information from the sales person.

YOU MAY FEEL YOU CAN JUDGE HOW MUCH storage space you'll need by looking. But if you're one of the people to whom empty spaces always seem many times bigger than they really are, you can take the expert's word for it that a 5 cubic foot refrigerator is minimum for 2 people, and a family of 4 will need a 6 cubic foot refrigerator. Adding a cubic foot for every 2 members in the family, gives a good basis for judging the size needed.

Use these figures as a starting point. From there on, you have to take your special needs into consideration. If you live within a stone's throw of your grocery store, this space may be sufficient. Your rural friend who has a farm 20 miles out on a country road ought to consider a slightly larger box. Urban families who entertain a lot and farm families who use their family refrigerator to keep their dairy products cool until market time will need more space than the amount which the Bureau of Home Economics recommends for average families.

NEXT THING TO CONSIDER IS SHELF SPACE. Surprising as it may seem, there are variations of as much as 3 square feet in a 6 cubic foot refrigerator. If you have your choice of a 6 cubic foot refrigerator with 14 square

feet of shelf space or one with 11 square feet of shelves you will undoubtedly pick the former, other things being equal. Be careful, however, not to get your extra shelf area at the expense of convenience. Though all shelves are at least 4 inches apart, many people require more space between shelves for their storage needs. When buying a refrigerator you should see whether there is enough distance between the shelves for the containers you use, and enough room on the milk shelf for milk and tall beverage bottles.

Good insulation is as important in the cheapest ice chest as it is in the most streamlined mechanical refrigerator. Its function is to keep heat from the food chamber. Because insulation is concealed between the refrigerator walls, it's hard for a consumer to find out whether it will do its work well. Best assurance that refrigerators are well insulated is a statement from the dealer or a manufacturer's guarantee that the refrigerator will maintain a temperature of 45 degrees or below in the milk compartment and 50 degrees in the food compartment when the refrigerator is loaded and the room temperature is 90 degrees.

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR REFRIGERATOR walls are most often made of steel, though an occasional ice refrigerator has outside walls of wood. Since these walls usually form the supporting frame for the refrigerator and encase the insulation itself, they should be sturdy, and as airtight as possible. Steel frames should be securely joined. Wooden frames should be carefully waterproofed to prevent rotting.

Most outside walls are covered with a synthetic enamel which is sprayed and baked on. It is easy to clean, hard to scratch, almost as durable and much less expensive than porcelain. Porcelain interior linings are fairly general. In some ice refrigerators walls are enameled and only floors are porcelain. Porcelain floor finish should extend at least 2







**DON'T GUESS** about the cubic contents of the box or the area of shelf space. Labels should tell you both, but if they fail to do so ask the salesman. Average city families with 4 members will find a 6 cubic foot box adequate. Shelves should be at least 4 inches apart.



**ASK** the salesman how much power or ice, as the case may be, it takes to maintain a temperature of 45 degrees in the milk compartment and 50 degrees in the food compartment when the refrigerator is loaded and the room temperature is 90 degrees.



**EVERY** assurance should be had that the box is constructed so as to keep the cold air in and the warm air of the room out. Rubber gaskets fitted around the edge of the door protect against air leakage.

inches up the walls. All refrigerator floors should be finished in acid-resisting porcelain, but even this finish will stain if acid foods, such as cut lemons, are allowed to remain on it for any length of time.

Doors should be built and fitted for maximum airtightness. They should be as well insulated as the refrigerator walls. Because steel is a conductor of heat, an insulating material such as layers of a hard plastic substance should line the closing surface of the door and the refrigerator opening. Rubber gaskets fitted around the edge of the door are a final protection against warm air leaking into the refrigerator. Hardware should be rust and tarnish-resisting. Hinges should be heavy enough to bear the strain of opening and shutting the door. Latches should catch and release easily when doors are closed or opened, and should be conveniently placed.

**WHEN YOU FIND A REFRIGERATOR WITH ALL** these provisions for keeping the warm and cold air where each belongs, you've gone most of the way toward getting a refrigerator that will do its job at the lowest possible cost in ice or mechanical power.

The only thing left is to check the efficiency of the refrigerating system, itself, if you're buying a mechanical refrigerator, or the construction of the ice compartment, if you select an ice box.

It's not hard to check on the construction of an ice compartment. The important points are: (1) See that the ice compartment is strong enough to stand the hard treatment it will get when heavy chunks of ice are more or less carelessly dropped inside. (2) See that the lining is rust-resisting. (3) See that adequate arrangements have been made to allow cold air to leave the ice compartment and for warm air to return to the ice compartment from the food compartment; fins or grids protruding from the ice rack help to cool the air. (4) See that the drain is copper, if possible, for slime will not readily cling to this metal. Finally, (5) if a side icer, check the baffle which, baffling as it sounds, is merely the partition separating the ice from food. It should extend from a point approximately 6 inches from the top of the refrigerator to 5 inches from the floor. Its purpose is to direct the flow of cool air around the food chambers.

**MECHANICAL REFRIGERATORS ARE DIFFICULT** for most women to examine. Their inner workings are often quite mystifying. To get an efficient box, the best bet is to buy from a well-established manufacturer or dealer recommended by people you know. It is wise to take the further precaution, also, of buying a make of refrigerator which has been on the market for some time; there is more chance then that the manufacturer will con-

tinue to make parts which you may need for replacement some time later.

Be sure to find out whether the mechanism is open or hermetically sealed. In the case of the open mechanism, it is doubly important that repair service is easily accessible and reliable. With the hermetically sealed kind, there is less chance of a motor going out of order. When it does need repair, the mechanism is removed and sent to the factory for adjustment, a substitute unit being used meanwhile. If you are offered a guarantee covering repairs that may be necessary over a period of years, be sure to read it carefully and note whether it covers the cost of replacement of parts and of the labor required to perform repair service.

**NEVER BUY A MECHANICAL BOX WITHOUT** seeing and hearing that type in operation. Listen to the motor. Find out how much of the time the motor must run to maintain the desired temperature when the box is full. The general rule is that the motor should be able to do its job operating about one-third of the time.

**CONVENIENCES USUALLY ADD TO COSTS.** Their value should be weighed against the dollars you have to spend for them. Some conveniences should come with every refrigerator at no additional cost. You should expect shelves that hook firmly and won't

tarnish or rattle. Sliding shelves make it easier to store and remove food in deep refrigerators. They should catch when pulled out part way to prevent tipping. All mechanical refrigerators should have a defrosting tray. Corners are rounded to make cleaning easier.

Other conveniences may be had, sometimes at extra charge or in higher priced boxes. In mechanical refrigerators, trays with automatic releases and ice cube releases are important conveniences. Ice cube makers for ice refrigerators is another item. Lights that turn on when you open the door, dishes for food, special "cold storage" meat compartments, shelves which can be arranged to accommodate foods of various sizes and shapes, special dishes and humidifying sections, are luxuries you can have, if you are able to pay for them, in mechanical refrigerators.

EVEN BEFORE YOUR NEW REFRIGERATOR holds its first cake of ice or cools and freezes its first tray of ice cubes, it's time to think about how to use it to best advantage. At this point you'll follow a different track if yours is an ice box than you will if you've bought a mechanical refrigerator.

Your ice box should be in the coolest convenient spot, away from the stove, out of the sun, but as close to the walls as you wish. Find out whether your ice compartment should be kept filled to work most effectively. When the ice rests on grids or fins and the air in the food compartments is cooled by contact with the bottom surface of the ice cake or the fins, the compartment does not have to be kept full. Clean the inside of the refrigerator regularly, especially the drain, to keep the refrigerator free of food odors. Lukewarm soda water is recommended for cleaning the interior of the refrigerator, the drain, trap, and dripping pan.

A GAS REFRIGERATOR REQUIRES MORE CAREFUL installation than an electric one. Space must be allowed for heat from the burning gas to escape. It is best to get advice from the distributor on how to install a mechanical refrigerator so that the heat from the motor and the condenser can escape. If the gas refrigerator is built into the kitchen cabinets, careful venting must be provided. All refrigerators operate more efficiently when they are perfectly level and firmly placed. It has been estimated that fuel consumption of refrigerators placed in the sun or next to a stove may increase 100 percent. Mechanical refrigerators should be defrosted before ice on the coils is  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick in order to cool most efficiently.

**WHATEVER kind of refrigerator you have, safeguard your food supply by observing these rules:**

*Do not overcrowd the refrigerator.*

*Don't let wrappings on food clutter up an ice box so as to choke off air circulation.*

*Cool hot food before storing.*

*Place most perishable foods in coolest spot.*

*Foods with strong odors—cheese, melons, etc.—should be placed on the warmest shelf where air passes over them just before reaching the cooling unit so that odors will not be picked up by other foods.*

*Put only clean food in the refrigerator.*

*Clean refrigerator once a week.*



# Stretch Your Food Dollar



**1. PLAN** before you market. Check supplies in your larder and left-overs in your ice box. Let the rules in "Diets to Fit the Family Income," guide you in planning. Make out a list of the foods you will want to buy for the coming week. You can get a free copy from the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.



**2. SHOP** around to compare prices. Watch the papers for specials. Do as much of your week's shopping at one time as you can so as to save effort and get the benefit of savings from quantity purchases. New York City consumers are luckiest; they have a morning broadcast to tell them what is most abundant on the market.



**3. BUY** by grade whenever you can. In many cities, it is possible to buy meat, eggs, canned fruits and vegetables, cheese, and butter which have been graded according to U. S. Government standards. Grades help you to get the quality you want and give you the quality you pay for. Look for them on the label or food.



**4. WATCH** the scales. First look for the seal that shows the scale has been inspected and approved by your weights and measures officials. Be sure the needle is at rest before the food is placed on the scale and that it comes to rest before the food is removed. See that no hand rests on the scale while food is being weighed.



## 8 easy ways to make your food dollar buy more in nourishing, balanced meals

11



**5. LOOK** for the net weight on packaged foods. Compare the cost per ounce of different brands and containers to determine which is cheapest. Be on your guard against off-size packages. Don't buy by the dime's worth; buy by the pound. Look for false bottoms. Remember that you pay for fancy wrappings and trimmings.



**6. TAKE** home the trimmings. Scraps of meat and fat trimmed off your meat order can be used in different ways. Beet tops are a valuable food; celery tops add flavor to soups. Outer leaves of cabbage and cauliflower contain valuable vitamins. Use them for soup if they are too tough for serving as green vegetables.



**7. LEARN** how to substitute low-cost for high-cost foods. Many have the same food values. For instance, the lean meat in any cut, grade, or kind of meat has practically the same food values. "Meat Dishes at Low Cost," tells you how to prepare them. Copies cost 5 cents each, from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

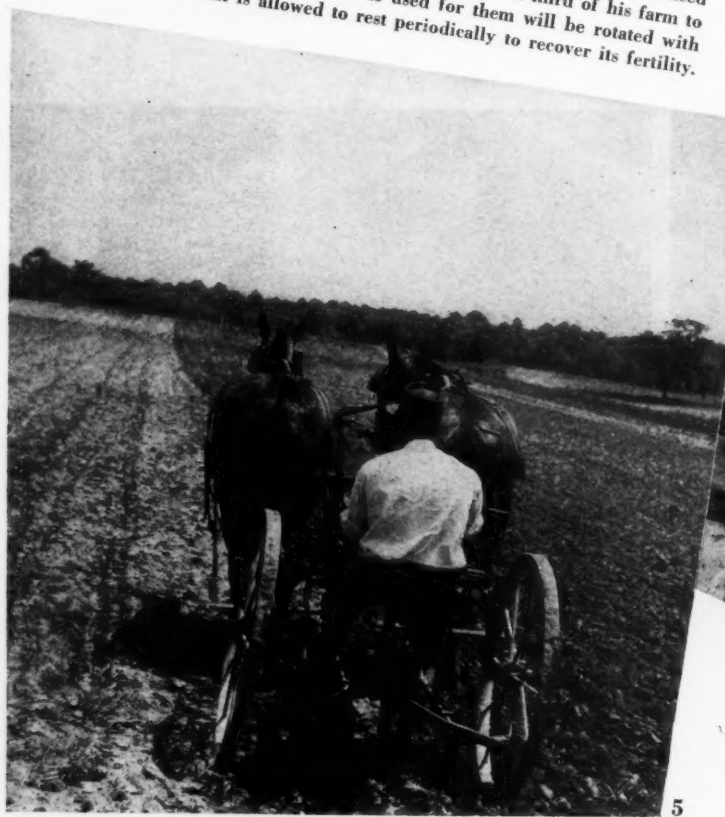
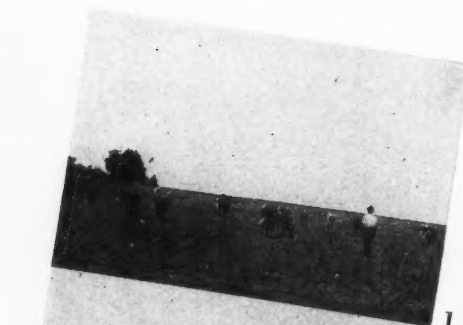


**8. USE** left-overs. Don't throw them away. Here's where ingenuity has a chance to shine. Delicious soups can be made by combining scraps or left-overs. A sauce can transform others. Meat can be ground up and combined with bits of vegetables for a stew. Water in which vegetables have been cooked should be added to soups.

## Investing in



**FOUNDATION OF GOOD LIVING** on the land<sup>\*</sup> is well-tended soil and well-balanced farming. Triple A lends a hand to Farmer Gray to help him rebuild the fertility of his soil, adopt new farm practices, and diversify his production so that his more-than-200-year-old Virginia farm can continue to provide a decent living for his family. (1) Fields formerly planted to corn and wheat are now pasture land for beef and milk cattle. (2) This pile of lime, when scattered over Mr. Gray's land, will reduce acidity and restore essential calcium to the soil. (3) This tree sheltered house is where Farmer Gray lives. (4) Land taken out of row crops and planted with clover for grazing is used for sheep. (5) Farmer Gray still plants a third of his farm to crops but the land that is used for them will be rotated with land that is allowed to rest periodically to recover its fertility.



# a Better Living from the Soil

13

*Farmer Gray's budget book shows how the Government and he are working together to build a more secure and adequate living from the earth\**



**SOUTH OF WASHINGTON**, before you reach the cotton country, or the tobacco country, hundreds of miles east of the corn and wheat belts, on rolling knolled land near a shallow rambling creek called Bull Run, there is a general farm operated by a man named Gray (not his real name, though he is a real farmer).

Mr. Gray isn't a rich farmer, and he isn't a poor farmer. He isn't a sharecropper, a tenant farmer, or a refugee from a dust bowl. He is a middle farmer, if there is such a person, and the kind of farming he does is typical of the region in which he lives.

He grows wheat and corn and barley, grasses, clover and lespedeza. His mare foaled this spring, and the colt, stiff legged, now stands about hip-high. There are quiet grayish sheep grazing in the pastures near the farmhouse and on the lawn in front of the farmhouse. There are pigs grunting in the pen, a flock of eternally ruffled turkeys, chickens, a few cows and a score of beef cattle. There is a kitchen garden and a small orchard.

MR. GRAY IS ONE OF THE 6 MILLION FARMERS participating in the program of the Triple A. Under the provisions of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1938 and its amendments, Mr. Gray is entitled to soil-conservation payments and to benefit payments.

Altogether Mr. Gray's payments for the year 1940 will add up to \$146.77.

If you pick this sum of \$146.77 apart you can see how the AAA works, what its purpose is, and what the people of the United States get back for their investment in the Gray farm.

The \$146.77 figure was computed in the

*\*This is the last in a series of 4 articles on soil conservation. Previous articles appeared in the April 15, May 1, and May 15, 1940, issues.*

office of the Agricultural Conservation Association of Prince William County where Mr. Gray's farm lies. This association, which administers the farm program, is made up of all the farmers in the program. Its work is administered by a committee elected by and from local farmers.

To get back to the \$146.77. That sum breaks down this way:

Soil-building allowance of 70 cents per acre of cropland on 142.3 acres .....	\$99.61
Wheat-Acreage Adjustment Payment .....	22.34
Wheat-Parity Payment .....	24.82
Total .....	\$146.77

TAKE THE FIRST BOOKKEEPING ENTRY, THE \$99.61 payment for soil-building practices. This allowance had to be earned, and as Mr. Gray puts it, "When they say earned, they mean earned." To earn the soil-building allowance, farmers must improve the soil on their farms in any one or more of a number of specified ways. The way Mr. Gray chose was to take some of the land he had previously planted to soil-depleting crops—crops that take minerals and nutrients out of the soil and permit the rain and winds to sweep away valuable topsoil—and plant it to soil-building crops such as clover and lespedeza. To do this, Mr. Gray first had to buy seed. In fact, he bought \$52.50 worth of seed, but even if he had planted something else he would have had to buy seed. So skip that.

Doing this wasn't enough to earn his soil-building payments. The AAA now requires that a farmer, if he wants to earn soil-building payments, go beyond keeping the land fertile. He must build up the land. It is not enough to restore fertility which has been taken out of the land. He must shift over from soil-depleting crops, and in addi-

tion put extra life in the soil. In some cases this means he must fertilize his pastures or turn under green manure crops. In other cases it means he must apply lime and phosphate to the soil. Plants and grasses like clover return nitrogen to the soil, but the soil in producing food and fiber also loses phosphorus and lime which must be restored.

So Mr. Gray went about restoring these essential plant nutrients to his soil. This costs money, and not every farmer is flush enough with cash in springtime to invest in his soil before it has yielded him an income in saleable crops. The Triple A has worked out a plan to outflank farmers' habitual shortage of cash. Lime and phosphates are distributed by the Triple A to soil-building farmers when they need them. Then, the cost of these supplies, considerably under market prices, is deducted from the farmer's Triple-A payment.

Triple A came to Mr. Gray's help, supplying him with 1,000 pounds of superphosphate, valued at \$18, and 25 tons of ground limestone, valued at \$68.75 more.

Against the soil-building payment of \$99.61 toward which he was working, Mr. Gray had a debt of \$86.75.

NOW, TAKE THE SECOND AND THIRD ITEMS which make up Mr. Gray's Triple-A benefit: the \$22.34 wheat adjustment payment, and the \$24.82 wheat parity payment.

Before Mr. Gray decided to take part in the AAA program he sowed slightly more than 20.5 acres to wheat. Under the National Farm Program it is necessary at this stage of its development to keep wheat plantings at a level which has been fixed for the entire country. The new emphasis on soil conservation does not stop at planning the number of acres to be planted to wheat. This program requires that farmers go on



past adjusting their wheat acreage for economic reasons to soil conservation for the national good.

The national wheat plan worked out this year so that Mr. Gray was asked to plant no more than 14.6 acres of wheat instead of his customary 20.5 acres.

As partial compensation for the loss of income from the 6 acres he would otherwise have planted to wheat, Mr. Gray receives what are known as wheat adjustment payments. They are based on the number of acres in his wheat allotment and the number of bushels of wheat usually harvested per acre.

Arithmetic explains the process. Mr. Gray's allotment was 14.6 acres this year under the wheat program. His average production of wheat per acre is 17 bushels. Seventeen bushels times 14.6 gives 248.2 bushels. For each of these bushels Mr. Gray raises as his part in the national wheat program, he receives 9 cents as compensation. That makes \$22.34, the wheat adjustment payment.

THIRD PORTION OF MR. GRAY'S CHECK, \$24.82, is called a parity-price payment. This payment fluctuates with the price of wheat. When wheat sells for prices which Congress considers fair to farmers there is no price-adjustment payment. When the price of wheat falls to unprofitable low levels, part of the farmer's losses are made up by a parity-price payment for each bushel of wheat raised under the wheat program. The parity-price payment per bushel this year is 10 cents. So Mr. Gray's total parity-price payment is 10 cents times the 248.2 bushels of wheat he will probably raise this year, or \$24.82.

You can't depend upon arithmetic to tell how a farm program affects a man and his farm. In fact, it's hard to say what you can depend upon, but it doesn't hurt to talk to the man and look at his farm.

ONCE YOU GET OFF THE MAIN HIGHWAY IN Prince William County, you get on a red clay road. The red clay is either Manassas shale, or Bull Run sandstone, the names soil specialists give to the earth underlying the topsoil in that part of the country.

Mr. Gray's lane runs between tidy wooden fences to a clump of trees topping a slight knoll. From there it leads past a tree-shaded farmhouse to a large barn, and then a tractor shed.

The first time you try to see Mr. Gray, he might be working on the tractor, grease-stained, a wrench in his hand. He's apologetic about the grease on his hands. "A

**"WE MUST WATCH** out lest conservation of our physical resources be pushed with full regard for the loss of dollars flowing off and down our streams, but no primary regard for wasted humanity. It is selfishness that has destroyed our natural resources, and to plead for conservation merely to stop the loss of dollars is to appeal to the same selfishness that wrought the destruction.

"It is only when human beings become the primary objective that conservation becomes the highest national virtue. Conservation can never become our master plan except as a nation's restitution for a great wrong done—not only to land, but to people."—HENRY A. WALLACE, *Secretary of Agriculture*.

farmer's got to be a mechanic these days," he explains. And then, while he's pleasant and affable, you get the idea that he's busy. He's got to get the tractor repaired so he can finish plowing his cornfield. The rain has set him back. How about tomorrow?

The next day you come out, and very likely you're directed toward a hill over on the south side of the farm. In the distance the plowed south field looks like a deep dark brown carpet laid on the sloping hillside. You finally make out the shape of 2 horses pulling something that looks like an old-fashioned buggy. That's a 2-horse corn planter. On top of it there is the lonely figure of a man. That's Mr. Gray.

DOWN IN THE FIELD MR. GRAY GETS OFF HIS perch on the corn planter and looks at the sky when you come up. It's deep blue to the top, so he thinks he has time to talk. While he waits for you to ask a question, he bends down to pick up lumps of soil which he pulverizes in his hands. He volunteers that he likes the feel of good soil.

"Is it good soil?" you ask.

"To tell the truth, it is and it isn't. Grandfather bought this farm back in 1840. He was running a livery stable, a sort of way station for stage coaches. They stopped there to change horses. That was on the old pike to the West. I don't guess you would know how grandfather felt," Mr. Gray explained, "but I know.

"He felt that farming is the only job for a man. So he bought this farm. A hundred years ago this farm had already been worked for a hundred years, maybe more than that."

Mr. Gray waved his hand to indicate the curving land sloping off toward the east.

"Wheat, tobacco, and brandy that was made out of apples grown around here used to roll down the valley years ago to docks at Quantico Creek. They loaded that stuff on sailing ships that came up the Potomac River and right up Quantico Creek. Then it went off to England."

MR. GRAY SMILED. "THAT WAS A LONG time ago. You can't do much more than wade in Quantico Creek now.

"Anyway, when grandfather bought this farm it was run-down. First thing he did was to plant it to clover and scatter every kind of fertilizer he could all over it. I don't know what kind he used. Then for a couple of years he didn't do anything but plow that clover under. That built the land up.

"You see," Mr. Gray holding out two hands full of earth so you could see it for yourself, "this soil isn't the rich black soil I hear tell you find out in the Midwest. And it isn't the soil I've seen myself up in the Shenandoah Valley. It's soil you've got to work with and take care of. If you do, you can get crops out of it. If you don't, you can't get anything out of it."

"Has this soil always been taken care of, Mr. Gray?"

"Can't say that it has. Whenever grandfather and father had money to spend, they put fertilizer into the soil. Of course, nobody can do what grandfather did when he took the farm, plough the clover back under. You've got to make a living.

"After the war between the States in reconstruction days the farm ran down badly."

"Wasn't there a battle fought around here?"

MR. GRAY LOOKS ACROSS THE FIELDS thoughtfully. "There sure was. The battle of Bull Run was fought all around here. They tell me a great uncle of mine was wounded at the far end of this farm.

"There's something about this land," Mr. Gray said, "I wouldn't like to leave it."

"But the soil was built up after reconstruction?"

"Oh yes. The next time the land really ran down again was from about 1920 until this Soil-Conservation Program began. Prices were so low we just didn't have the money to buy the seed and fertilizer it needed. You could see the land wearing out."

"And now?"

"Well, I'll tell you. After 4 years of the farm program, I'd say the land has gained a third in production. You can see it. Pastures feed more cattle, and fields give better harvests.

"I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT SOIL CONSERVATION is. I've seen land wear out. I'll tell you, I'm not so sure about the parity-price payments or wheat-adjustment payments, but I guess I would think differently about that if I really depended on wheat the way farmers out West do. But this soil conservation, all I can say is soil conservation will live a long time in your land.

"It's an investment, that's what it is. And I believe in it. I have to believe in it; this is my land."

## BUYING MEAT BY GRADE

[Concluded from page 5]

in meat grading, meat buying or selling before they are allowed to apply the Government grade to meat. In addition they must pass satisfactorily a 12-month probationary period. These stiff qualifications are set up to keep the grades as uniform as possible.

Service charge for grading is \$2 an hour. This is charged to the packer to make the service self-supporting. On the average, 50 carcasses are graded in an hour. The cost averages about three-hundredths of a cent a pound. That cost of grading is too small to make a difference in the cost of meat to consumers.

Don't confuse the "round purple stamp" of meat inspection with the grade mark. The round purple stamp is required by law to be put on all meat crossing State lines. It is an indication that the meat has been inspected and passed by the U. S. Government, and that it was safe for human food and clean when it left the inspected establishment.

Grade marks appear over and over again on the whole length of any meat carcass, as U. S. Choice, U. S. Good, or whatever the grade might be. You should be able to find the grade mark without any difficulty on all cuts claimed to be Government-graded.

**CONSUMER TIME ON THE AIR** brings you more than an earful of consumer news each week. This cross-country program which is broadcast each Saturday at 10:45 A. M., Eastern Standard Time, in cooperation with the General Federation of Women's Clubs, offers a special consumer bulletin to help listeners remember what they have heard over the air. This radio-print plan has been prompted by demand from listeners who know the value of having source material to which they can refer later and use in their consumer study groups. If your local station does not carry this program, produced by the Consumers' Counsel Division of the Department of Agriculture, write us and we shall be glad to tell you the nearest station which does.

**FOOD COSTS.** Retail food costs continued to climb upward slowly from April to May. Costs in general were up one percent. Meats, and fruits and vegetables were the major foods that advanced in price. These increases more than offset reductions in prices of dairy products—only items in which significant decreases occurred.

Compared with last May, food costs are 3 percent higher. However, they are 3 percent below the average level of the past 5 years. Except for last year, costs were the lowest for any May since 1934.

Retail food costs pictured in the chart on this page are the revised index numbers just issued by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and are not comparable with material published in past issues of the *Guide*.

**FOOD SUPPLIES.** Supplies during the last half of 1940 probably won't be as large as last year. Last year supplies were relatively large, and this reduction does not mean any shortages in food supplies.

Prospective changes in supplies of major foods from 1939 levels follow:

**INCREASES:** Pork, better grade beef, lard, cheese, evaporated milk, summer oranges.

**DECREASES:** Lower grade beef, poultry, eggs, canned fruits, dried fruits, fresh fruits (except citrus), canned vegetables, fresh vegetables.

**NO CHANGE:** Butter, wheat, lamb, total beef supplies, and dried beans.

**MELONS.** Considerably more watermelons and cantaloups than last July are in prospect. Watermelons generally are most plentiful in July, and cantaloup marketings reach their peak in August.

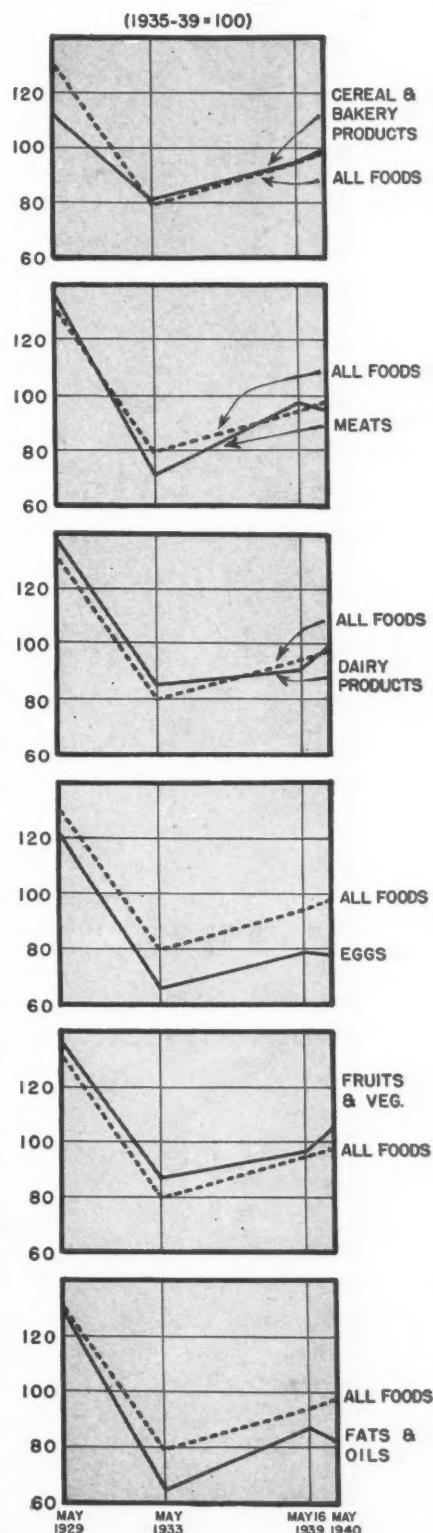
**FRUITS.** Peaches, apricots, sweet cherries, and grapes probably won't be as plentiful as last summer but larger amounts of summer oranges and sour cherries are expected. Little change from a year ago is in prospect for supplies of pears and California plums.

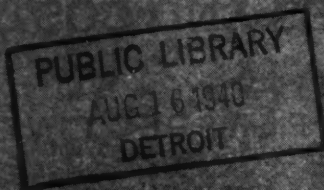
**POULTRY AND EGGS.** Most of the reduction in egg supplies from 1939 levels is expected to occur during the latter part of the last half of 1940.

**MEATS.** Larger amounts of better grade beef, pork, and lamb, but smaller amounts of lower grade beef than last July are in prospect.

**DAIRY PRODUCTS.** Peak in butter production for 1940 appears to have been reached in June, and seasonal decreases in production are in prospect during the remainder of 1940.

## A PERSPECTIVE





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